Pearl and Wagner
Two Good Friends
by Kate McMullan • illustrated by R. W. Alley

What creative idea will help Pearl and Wagner remain good friends?
Everyone in Ms. Star’s class was talking about the Science Fair.

“I am going to make a robot,” said Pearl.

“I am going to win a prize,” said Wagner.

Pearl got to work. She taped up the flaps of a great big box. She cut a hole in the top. Then she cut a hole in the lid of a shoe box. She glued the shoe box lid to the top of the great big box. Wagner held the boxes together while the glue dried.

“Maybe I will make a walkie-talkie,” he said.
Pearl punched a hole in one end of the shoe box. She stuck string through the hole. She tied the string in a knot.

“Maybe I will make a brain out of clay,” said Wagner.

“Cool,” said Pearl.

She drew eyes and a nose on the shoe box.

Wagner looked at the shoe box.

“The eyes are too small,” he said.

Pearl made the eyes bigger.

“Maybe I will make a rocket,” said Wagner.

“Vrooom! Blast off!”

Pearl put the shoe box onto the lid.

“There!” she said. “Finished!”

Pearl pulled the string. The robot’s mouth opened. She threw in a wad of paper. Then she let go of the string. The robot’s mouth shut.

“Wow!” said Wagner. “A trash-eating robot!”
“Let’s see what everyone has made,” said Ms. Star.

“Uh-oh,” said Wagner. He had not made anything yet.
Lulu raised her hand. “I made a walkie-talkie,” she said.
“I was going to do that!” said Wagner.

Henry showed how to get electricity from a potato.
“Henry is a brain,” said Pearl.
“Pearl?” Wagner said. “Remember how I held the boxes together while the glue dried?”
“I remember,” said Pearl. “Remember how I told you to give the robot bigger eyes?” asked Wagner.
Pearl nodded. “I remember.”

“I made paper airplanes,” said Bud.
“This chart shows how far they flew.” Wagner slapped his head. “Why didn’t I think of that?”
“Your turn, Pearl,” said Ms. Star.

“I made a trash-eating robot,” said Pearl. She looked at Wagner. He was slumped down in his seat.

“Wagner and I made it together,” said Pearl. Wagner sat right up again.

Pearl pulled the robot’s string. She pulled too hard. The robot’s head fell off.

“Uh-oh,” said Wagner.

“I guess you two friends have more work to do,” said Ms. Star.

“I guess so,” said Pearl. “But I don’t mind, because Wagner and I will do all of the work together.”

“Uh-oh,” said Wagner.
The Science Fair

On Science Fair Day, Pearl and Wagner were still working on their robot. Pearl stretched rubber bands. She held them tight. Wagner stapled them onto the shoe box and the lid. “That should do it,” he said.

Pearl and Wagner hurried to the gym with their robot. They passed a boy with an ant village. They passed a girl playing music for plants. They passed Henry. He had his electric potato hooked up to a tiny Ferris wheel.
Pearl and Wagner set up their robot.

A judge came over.

“Watch this,” said Pearl. Pearl pulled the robot’s string. Nothing happened. She pulled harder. The robot’s mouth popped open. The rubber bands flew everywhere.

“Yikes!” said the judge.

“Oh, no!” said Wagner. “There goes our prize!”

“We are not quite ready,” Pearl told the judge.

“I will come back in five minutes,” said the judge.

“I have more rubber bands in my desk,” said Pearl. She raced off to get them.

Wagner tapped his foot. He bit his nails. Pearl was taking forever! The judge would be back any second. He had to do something.

Wagner looked around. No one was watching him. He pulled the tape off the big box. He opened the back of the robot and slipped inside.
The judge came back. She did not see Pearl and Wagner. She started to leave.

“Wait!” said the robot.

“Oh, my stars!” said the judge.

“A talking robot!”

Just then Pearl came back.

“You have a nice smile,” the robot was telling the judge. “And such pretty eyes.”

“Do you think so?” said the judge.

Pearl could not believe her ears.

“Your robot is so smart!” said the judge.

“How does it work?”

“Oh . . .” said Pearl. “It is hard to explain.”

The judge opened the robot’s mouth. She looked inside.

“Hi there!” said Wagner.

“Uh-oh,” said Pearl.
The judge gave out the prizes. The girl who played music for plants won first prize. Henry and his electric potato won second prize. The trash-eating robot did not win any prize at all.

“I was only trying to help,” Wagner told Pearl. “I know,” said Pearl. “You are a good friend, Wagner. And you were a pretty good robot too.”